

Out of Chaos, Culture Raises Its Head and Heart

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clearinghouse where audiences can learn about events, artists can exchange information and cultural organizations can promote themselves and pool their resources.

One percent of the proceeds from bonds of most city capital projects are now used to commission works of art. The report suggests this be raised to 2 percent.

"New Orleans cannot — and indeed should not — simply be 'put back as it was,'" the report says. "We need a dynamic cultural strategy that simultaneously aids the artists, organizations and associations that are currently at risk, and clears the pathway for expansion of our cultural sector and its appeal to cultural tourists and philanthropic investors."

Like most other industries, the city's cultural sector took a big hit from the hurricane. Fewer than 25 percent of the city's 1,000 nonprofit and commercial arts organizations are up and running again, and the cost of restoring them is estimated at \$185 million over three years, the report says. More than \$30 million in operating revenue will be lost by cultural organizations this year alone, the report estimates.

About 11,000 arts employees lost their jobs, and the overall creative work force has dropped from 15,000 to less than 5,000, the report says. Three-quarters of the city's 260 nonprofit arts organizations remained closed at the end of November. The uninsured damage to cultural properties, arts businesses and artists tops \$80 million, and requests for assistance exceed \$512 million.

The number of musicians has dropped from more than 2,000 to fewer than 250, according to the report, and more than 400 of these artists have sought assistance from their unions, reporting hundreds of thousands of dollars of equipment and property damage. Social aid and pleasure clubs, Mardi Gras Indian tribes and similar groups have reported losses of more than \$3 million from destroyed costumes, instruments and other items.

Among the report's more specific proposals are the planning and construction of a National Jazz Center; a Linear Culture Park that would link important cultural sites, and an expansion of the Warehouse Arts District, with cultural thoroughfares along South Rampart Street and Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard.

It also suggests a three-year marketing effort to promote New Orleans cultural history and offerings around the world, from the heritage of jazz artists like Louis Armstrong or Jelly Roll Morton; to writers like Tennessee Williams or John Kennedy Toole to the chef Paul Prudhomme to artists like the photographer E. J. Bellocq. In addition, the report calls for improving visitor amenities like signage and hospitality services; developing school curriculums on the cultural history of Louisiana; trying to attract investment from philanthropists and corporations; and creating a New Orleans Cultural Restoration Oversight Commission to supervise the overall effort.

"When we saw our city go under water, it's like seeing something happen to your mama," Mr. Marsalis said. "You wish you had something more to give it than time."